



AAPAE NEWSLETTER No 14
31st January 2011

To celebrate our 10th year of gathering we are pleased to announce that CURRAMBENA in Lane Cove in Sydney, will host the 2011 Conference. A date is still to be set but it is likely to be held in the September/ October holidays

Previous AAPAE conferences were

2001 - CURRAMBENA, SYDNEY, NSW

2002 - MARBURY, ADELAIDE, SA

2003 - PINE COMMUNITY SCHOOL, BRISBANE, QLD

2004 - FITZROY COMMUNITY SCHOOL, MELBOURNE, VIC

2005 - PRESHIL, MELBOURNE, VIC

2006 - IDEC, SYDNEY, NSW

2007 - KINMA, SYDNEY, NSW

2009 - TAMARIKI, CHRISTCHURCH, NZ

2010 – HURSTBRIDGE LEARNING CO-OPERATIVE, VIC

AAPAE's 9th ANNUAL GATHERING AND CONFERENCE was hosted by HURSTBRIDGE LEARNING CO-OP from SATURDAY 3rd - MONDAY 5th JULY 2010

Report by Cecelia Bradley



Friday 2nd July 2010

Being met by Greg, Sally and Adrienne at Melbourne airport meant that old and new friends were all connecting again - out of the city to Eltham and Hurstbridge to a wonderful warm welcome dinner provided by Lucinda and Sean and Sue and all their families. It was very special to immediately feel at home amongst members of the Hurstbridge community and to enjoy the dramas and play of the kids as dinner was prepared followed by a concert on medieval music with the people of Eltham. A special way to begin the weekend and I did not feel TOO guilty when I realised the trouble that many had with your flights and arrivals!!

DAY 1. Saturday 3rd July 2010

Arriving at the Learning Co-operative in Hurstbridge, having a sense of the place and the bush at last, and meeting up with Greg, Catherine, Jo, Breeze, Felicity, Tas and especially Maitreyi Ray who had made the initial invitation many years ago was very special. After introductions and welcomes from Greg and Breeze we had a getting to know you session where all the participants introduced themselves and their schools. We had participants from VIC, QLD, NSW, WA, TAS, ACT, NZ. Points of interest for me which the schools shared during the day.

Hurstbridge Learning Co-operative VIC



Parent run - 12 Families currently

Diversity

Problems of producing a written document

Consensus is central

Listen/Value

Fluidity

Pine Community School, QLD

Happy kids learn

Child centred juggled with democratic aspects

Parent Built - new building

60 kids

Kinma means Awake, NSW

60 kids

one third are seeking the philosophy, one third is escaping a system they do not like and one third attend as part of the parental journey

bush environment is integral

relationship with self, others, land sustainability when what how?

awareness around the child who has real say and parents have a say.

Worana Aboriginal College VIC

50 Students aged 13 - 18

Residential College

Students from NT/ WA NSW all around the country

Conventional Curriculum

Coonawarra Sth Gippsland, VIC

Fiona starting a new school and wants to meet and learn about others

Currambena

84 kids plus Preschool of approx 25 each day

Established for 41 years

Democratic/ Childcentred/No testing

urban, not much space

has Articles of Association which articulate broad philosophy

60% new families so have to revisit philosophy

Active Conflict Resolution programmes for kids parents and teachers

2nd generation of kids bring energy and history

Maridahdi - means embellish, QLD

55 families, 75 kids

Louis Bradfield a key person

Early Childhood

Is our practice matching what we are doing?

Toowoomba is a conservative place

Space issues

Peregrine, TAS

Started in 2000

20mins south of Hobart

Teacher directed

Is now different from when started. Relationships and negotiations are key,

independence in how they learn

Lots of meetings and discussions

branded as the hippy school /feral -- (Ed's comment- aren't we all and proud of it?)

perspective of parents who want things to be done their way - school is blamed

Fitzroy Community School, VIC

60 kids, urban

teacher run

teachers and parents cook lunch - kitchen is the hub of school

School camps and the Land very central

Mix of structure and unstructure

flexible, continuity and diversity of teachers

Know kids for 7 years

2nd generation vision

families have to be supportive

1. happy children

2 viable relationships

3 academic excellence which we pursue but not promote

Step out of culture and reflect

personal plus connection is probably the future

Ask the question 'what have you done to make the world a better place

Dr Bob Grandin from the University of Sunshine Coast ran a session called Recognising and Supporting Diversity - a topic close to all our hearts. Bob spoke about the need for effective educational reform, as it seems that much of the reforms we have tried have not worked. He supports encouraging reflective practice and understanding the learner both as an individual and in social context. He shared with us some aspects of the work of Dr Christine A Johnson and his connections with her. Bob worked alongside her for two years in the USA and introduced the programme to Australia. Some of her works include Let me Learn, Making a Difference, Each Day All Year, One Learner at a Time, Unlocking the Will to Learn. He emphasised the

I know - Cognition, I feel -Affectation and I do/act -Conation.

Bob introduced the tool of the Learning Connections Inventory which hopes to identify ways of connecting learning processes to our thinking, personal relations and performance. Bob emphasised that it was not a conventional test and no outcome was better than another, it is a tool to help a person

know who you are as a learner

know your preferred way to learn

know the types of learning you avoid

know and use your strengths

learn to improve

The questions of the inventory led to scores in four categories of sequential, precise, technical and confluent processing and depending on the score each person could see whether they used the pattern first as needed or avoided it. I have to confess to needing to keep an open mind about such tools as the inventory as I feel concerned about putting labels on people and putting them into categories. Due to the constraints of time Bob was not able to put into effect the words of encouragement which suggested "changing the wording in a sentence or add words so that you

could select a response that more specifically describes you and feel free to write any changes in the booklet" which I think would enable a broader reflection and considered use of this tool. Thinking about thinking and learning is a crucial aspects of our work as learners and teachers and I appreciated the thinking about meta-awareness and its aspects of mulling, connecting, rehearsing, reflecting and revisiting.

Websites for more information

letmelearn.org



Diane de Vere, who was the first co-coordinator of Hurstbridge Learning Co-operative, shared her incredible life journey and her experience of Bothways Learning and Deep Learning working in Indigenous Communities and Schools. Diane was born in the UK during the war and became a 'ten pound pom' migrant to country Victoria. In the early 70s she was among the group who started the Learning Co-op and knew that when a

child asked the question 'does the bunny know he is furry?' that her life journey of understanding learning was underway.

After Co-op, Diane went to Alice Springs and began her work in places such as at Kintore and Papunya. She has been active in bilingual education, national education reforms agendas community school partnership the AEP 21 Goals and at Yipininya in 2002 developed culturally inclusive two way

education and new ways of working curriculum and pedagogy assessment at Cape York 2003, Kode Bureau 2005, demerging, deconstructing reconfiguring developing National Schools Network and rethinking education for 21st century.

To develop culturally appropriate curricula, dialogue, praxis, conscientisation, statutory educational action and metaphor are needed. It is based on the questions

Where's your country?

Who is your family?

What is your story?

The Hurstbridge KIDS welcomed us by playing funky, infectious music on the wonderful marimbas that they had made and Catherine and her team continued to provide delightful, nutritious food for us all to share and brought our first day to a close.

DAY 2 – Sunday 4th July

Dr Bob Grandin responded to the wishes of the group to give more time and attention to the possibility of setting up an alternative high school and ran his session first. He shared many of the experiences he has had in rescuing 'failing' schools and setting up alternative high schools.

He asked himself this main question - is the purpose of the school to nurture the potential of the individual or to teach a set curriculum? At St Banabas' in Qld, 50% were indigenous, the curriculum required two hours a week (3 classes in 5 subjects) and the rest of the day was given to activities which revolved around the interest and capacities of the students and the school. There were farm resources, horses, adventure activities such as camping, climbing, canoeing including building canoes, rafts. He organised buses so that there was ready transport for the weekly boarders and to act as mobile class rooms and to enable the Year 10 Agricultural trip. The school was attractive to non- academic student but maintained tertiary entrance

Diane accompanied her whirlwind 'talking in circles' as she described it, with amazing visuals and charts of many journey maps which showed the depth and extent of this body of work and no words can do justice to the commitment and passion and effectiveness of this work which respected and honoured our indigenous people and their children. She touched briefly on the issue of the phasing out of bi-lingual education which was a central part of the work and the flow-on effects this has had.

scores, employed a wide range of staff, had an extended day and gave staff time off so as to keep to awards. Students had choice of activities as well as academic work. Bob was at Slade School, Warwick in 1991 It was a boys' boarding school and amalgamated with St Catherine's in 1970

There were 8 high schools for population of 10 000 so the school suffered from the opening of other high schools in the bush.

There were 70 students at the end of 1990 mainly indigenous from remote communities including the NT. It was split in two and promoted as an international senior school in Asia. Bob banned testing, had contract based curriculum, introduced choice and options, National profiles and introduced Kidmap, reporting was process based, included choice and options and emphasised socio-cultural processes. The work of Vygotsky informed the way, emphasising learning from each other, doing and watching, co-operative, negotiated vertical groupings based on interest, not age, integrated, constructivist, assessment was formative not summative. In 2006 Bob published "Following Vygotsky to a Learner Centred School" and this was based on his Doctoral Research into children's experience of learning in an alternative school. Some key ideas that struck me were

Learning as Edupleasure

Learning for deeper understanding

Learning as exploring the unknown

Despite its obvious success with 230 students and because of 150 acres of valuable land in the city of Warwick the Anglican Church chose to sell the school in Warwick but Bob believes that that many of the concepts and elements live on at the Blackhall Range Independent School on the Sunshine Coast where he acts as a mentor. The school is a parent owned and run co-operative with a focus on self-direction and empowerment. For more information about this visit their website, <http://www.brischool.com.au/>

Bob's experience in reinvigorating these struggling high schools using learner-centred focus validates many of the principles on which we have based our education and informed the discussions that followed during the day on the process of setting up an alternative high school in Sydney. Bob also shared his experience of implementing many of these ideas in the tertiary sector including awareness of other pathways such as Head Start, Tertiary Prep Pro, TAFE and others



David Cohen

It was a great pleasure to welcome our life member of AAPAE, Dr David Cohen, his wife Margo and son Ben to our meeting. David was a co-founder of Currambena and Yinbilliko back in the late '60s and had an important mentoring role for Kinma and Elonera, "his children". He has had a long association with many of us and as well as being our friend, he is one of our living treasures in his unwavering support for and commitment to alternative and progressive education. His address was titled Sustaining our Core Principles, Remaining Sustainable and Open to Positive Change. The key ingredients of progressive education are:

1. Progressive education is 'learner-centred' and develops a concern for individual persons.
2. Progressive education seeks to 'blend'.
3. In progressive education, learning arises from interests and motivation to learn rather than direction and coercion.
4. In progressive education, there is emphasis upon 'learning to learn in an attempt to develop non-directed learning. Providing the freedom for learners to learn replaces teacher-imposed structure.
5. In progressive classroom and schools, there is free access to many alternative resources and activities.
6. Progressive education is focused upon the all-round development of the 'whole child'.
7. Progressive education seeks to promote a social context based upon caring and consideration for others and self-discipline in preference to discipline imposed by rules, regulations, corporal punishment and coercion.
8. Progressive education seeks to develop abilities to communicate effectively.
9. Progressive education seeks to involve those affected by the decisions.

about learning as participants in the making of those decisions.

10. Progressive education is concerned with providing a happy enjoyable environment for improved learning.

David reminded us of Carl Roger's point of the significance of what we discover for ourselves. He stressed the importance of negotiation leading to freedom. David told us the story of his mother's recipe which others tried to

recreate but it was never the same even though they used the same ingredients. Each has to create their own unique taste and style.

David has generously donated some of his many books and writings for AAPAE and schools to sell during the conference and at our subsequent meetings or school fetes etc. If anyone would like copies please let me know and we can arrange it.

Patrick Price shared with us his amazing work as Founder and President of The Centre for Learning and Children's Rights (CLCR) www.forchildrights.com/ and Director of The Heartland Children's Academy (HCA) in Nepal. www.heartlandnepal.com/

Pat managed with a few effective strategies to give us a small taste of the conditions that children face in their schools if they are able to attend school at all and the gender differences that are very striking. 25 children in a very small cramped space, few breaks, less than 35% of teachers have training, one child in the family usually attends and lower caste members do not attend, rigid academic approach rote learning, corporal punishment and verbal humiliation are very prevalent, nil resources, incomes very low, female dropout high and so the list goes on.

Some of the positive strategies that Heartland and CLCR have developed include opportunities for gender equality through scholarships for females to attend school, maternity leave for staff which has been non-existent, equal pay especially as 60% of the population is female and a gradual move towards more democratic education. Through well-educated females empowered and fulfilling lives are possible. The plan is to build capacity and develop a different type of school environment, free of violence, verbal abuse and verbal humiliation and corporal punishment. Heartland is moving towards being more student centred, building relationships, smaller classes, life skills, holistic learning, including access to literature through the library,

mathematics technology, Science Laboratory, agricultural and cooking education and including what they call Democratic Friday as starting place.

I put in a plea here for your support for Pat's work at Heartland so that it can "grow, bring a new approach to teaching in Nepal and increase its benefits to the communities" especially those in the untouchable castes, the indigenous, disabled, orphaned children and the women of the country. On a personal note I am proud that one of my former students at Currumbena is putting his heart into such work.

The remaining afternoon session was a series of forums and discussions on the topics voted of most importance and interest to the group. These included

1. Student and Child Centred Learning
2. Practical Application of Theory: The balance between government obligations and requirements and philosophy
3. Strategies to deal with Families who come late in a child's education – Special Needs issues and where do you draw the line?
4. Evolution of our movement Where are we going? The Big Picture.

DAY 3 MONDAY 5th July 2011

The morning was spent on wide ranging discussions and impute about current state and federal government initiatives and requirements provided for us by an interesting mix of visitors to our AAPAE conference. We welcomed Tim Johnson, Director of Public Affairs and Aine Maher Director of Education Services from Independent Schools Victoria, Karin Geradts and Brian Walters from the Green's Party and The Hon Martin Dixon MP the Shadow Minister for Education Victoria. We had received apologies from Bronwen Pike the Vic Minister for Education and the then Federal Minister Julia Gillard. Tim and Aine summarised for us many of the aspects and issues facing our schools such as Funding, NAPLAN and Testing, National Curriculum, My School Data and numbers an the additions likely to the website and encouraged us to keep in touch with bureaucrats and politicians, have a regular flow of information and emphasize our difference from the bigger elite schools. We can expect more developments re national Curriculum, national testing and the Myschools website with more additions and we need to be focused on the Federal Funding Review currently under way. It was worthwhile listening to the perspectives

of Karen and Brian as Greens who both shared with us their connections with Alternative Schools and Education, though we did not resolve our fundamental differences with the greens re funding! Martin Dixon articulated an unexpected perspective in recognising that schools is not fun any more for many students that there is over testing and over accountability and given that now the state elections have been held and the power has shifted in Vic it will be interesting to see whether any of this is taken into account with the new government's policies.

I wanted to say a special thanks to Tim Berryman for leading by his own actions and initiating and encouraging this dialogue – an important aspect of AAPAE's role.

Next Steps

A practical next step that we again discussed was the process of adopting a politician and keeping in regular contact with them so that we build a relationship where our voices are heard. Any takers?

AN ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOL IN SYDNEY - When? Where? How? Who? Why?

This topic was uppermost in the minds of many of the participants and much discussion was held about it and we await further discussions and developments!

There was a suggestion that Schools might like to write about themselves and post it on the AAPAE website so if anyone wants to start the ball rolling please do please get in touch with Cec.

AAPAE 2010 AGM was held during the Conference and the Committee for this year was elected as follows

AAPAE Committee for 2010/2011

Cecelia Bradley (ACT) - President

Sue Goode (NSW) - Secretary

Keith Goode (NSW) - Treasurer

Chris Price (NSW)

Adrienne Huber (WA)

Ian Sheppard (WA)

Wendy Pettit (NSW)

Juli Gassner (NSW)

Di Scullin (NZ)

For copies of reports contact Cec

THANK YOU to the Students at Learning C-op, to Greg, Jo, Breeze, Catherine and all the parents who made us so welcome and worked so hard to enable us to have a great gathering. My apologies to you all for the lateness of this report and please be assured that the memory of our time in your special place stays with me. I look forward to those memories being revived when we see you this year and when the art work to which everyone contributed is unveiled on the quilt.



Breeze



Greg



Breeze and Cec

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

IDEC2011 www.ideceudec.org will be held in the UK in July.

Registration for IDEC@EUDEC Conference 2011 is Open!

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION CLOSSES on

31st JANUARY 2011

We are excited to announce that registration for the IDEC@EUDEC Conference is now open! There are big discounts for people booking early and the first 100 people to get tickets will be entered into a raffle with a top prize of a wine and cheese tasting tour at the beautiful Sharpham Vineyard in Devon. Other prizes include a hand knitted woollen scarf (knitted by Chloe) and a EUDEC T-shirt. To find out more about the conference and book your place visit

www.ideceudec.org

The website has much useful information about fees, transport to the site and alternative accommodation. This is a short extract:

The fees include conference entry, registration pack, 3 meals a day starting with dinner on the evening of the 5th and ending with breakfast on the 14th, refreshments in between workshops and use of the extensive grounds of the venue including adventure playgrounds, sports courts and picnic areas.

As well as all this a pitch for your tent with close and easy access to shower and toilet blocks is included in the fee.

Arrivals for the main conference programme will be on the afternoon of the 5th of July with the main conference programme starting on the morning of the 6th July. Departures will be on the morning of the 14th July.

Conference Fees:

Early Bird: cut-off point 31 January
Adults: £330 Students: £230

Middle Fee: cut-off point 30 April
Adults: £380 Students: £255

Late Fee:
Adults: £430 Students: £280

Group discounts will be available for some large groups and there will be some bursaries available for people from low income backgrounds.

Call for Proposals for Workshops and Presentations

We are happy to announce that the theme of the IDEC@EUDEC Conference 2011 to be held in the UK, hosted by Sands School, is Past, Present and Future. We welcome your proposals for talks, workshops and presentations for the conference programme.

The thinking behind the theme is that in order to progress we need to learn from our past, look at what is going on now and explore ways we can develop and grow in the future.

The theme is a loose one that gives everyone the room to freely explore a wide range of subjects and topics, whilst giving the conference a vague structure to follow.

If you are attending the conference and have an idea for a talk, workshop or presentation you would like to run, please send your proposal to proposals2011@eudec.org

We will be limiting the time slots given to pre-scheduled workshops as we plan to keep most of the timetable free for open space sessions that will be filled by participants at the time of the conference, so if you do not get your proposal on the programme before the time of the event you will still have the chance to run it at the conference.

We are really looking forward to receiving your proposals and seeing what interesting workshops and presentation people have to offer. As workshops get confirmed we will be posting them on the website so keep a look out there for the programme as it develops –www.ideceudec.org

We would also like to remind you that the earlybird fees end on the 31st January so to benefit from the big discounts available go to www.ideceudec.org and book your conference place.

Look forward to seeing you here in July - Chloe Duff (IDEC@EUDEC Conference Coordinator)

IDEC 2010

was held in Israel from 6th – 13th April 2010.

It was run by the Institute of Democratic Education in Tel Aviv.

The website for the conference is <http://www.2010.e-idec.org>

Please consider becoming a member of AAPAE.

For details visit our website www.aapae.edu.au or contact us

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